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ABSTRACT

This essay discusses impediments to student success in today's urban schools and recommends solutions for the future. The following problems are covered: (1) overcrowded classrooms; (2) student behavioral problems; (3) lack of instructional materials; (4) outdated facilities; (5) inadequate school library collections; (6) low teacher salaries; (7) availability and use of drugs; (8) family breakup; (9) lack of afterschool education programs; and (10) poverty. Solutions include the following: (1) improvement of student-teacher ratios, (2) provision of quality instructional materials; (3) newly designed flexible facilities; (4) curricular emphasis on aesthetics; (5) improvement of school library collections; (6) improvement of teachers salaries; (7) drug-free environment; (8) improved quality of urban family life; (9) afterschool education programs; and (10) elimination of poverty. The need for public support of educational financing is emphasized. A 10-item bibliography is included. (FMW)

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The Urban School of the Future

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THE URBAN SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE

Educators need to have visions of the future. What kinds of curriculum are needed for students in urban schools? Each student must experience objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures which meet personal interests, capabilities, and challenge. Students individually need to attain optimally. Teachers, administrators, and society need to be supportive of guiding each learner to achieve as much as possible. Optimal progress is a must for each student.

The following negate a curriculum which assists students to grow, achieve, develop and accomplish:

1. overcrowded classrooms. The teacher then cannot provide help to each student.

2. behavioral problems. Among others, students who have grown up in a society where poverty and unemployment have been threatening factors, might not exhibit attitudes conducive to school achievement.

3. lack of materials for teaching. Textbooks and audio-visual materials are outdated or lack in quality. There may not be a textbook for each student.

4. school facilities not conducive to learning. School buildings were built for earlier decades and have not been renovated or built to meet educational needs of students.

5. materials in school libraries being minimal and lacking relevance.

6. low salaries for teachers. The salaries are not adequate to make a decent livelihood. Moonlighting is necessary to supplement income from

teaching.

7. drugs readily available in society. Drug dealers in society are numerous, and students become victims of drug abuse.

8. breakup of the family as a unit. Students grow up in homes which lack parental cohesion and fail to support the former in learning and achieving.

9. a lack of afterschool programs of education. Society has failed in providing quality educational programs after the school day has ended.

10. poverty in society. Too many school-aged students are affected by poverty in its diverse manifestations. Lack of income hinders the home setting from providing a rich educational environment.

School and society will need to remedy situations which cause students to achieve less than optimal development.

Futurism in Urban Schools

Which are selected visions of the future involving urban education?

First, urban schools will need to emphasize a one teacher to fifteen student maximum ratio. Teachers will be better educated and prepared to teach inner city students. Urban teachers will then be more proficient in selecting quality objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures. With an appropiate student-teacher ratio and with the latter having completed a demanding program of preservice education, urban learners will be guided to attain as much as individual abilities permit.

Second, students with behavioral problems will be taught in a class of no more then five members. With low numbers of students, the teacher will be better able to monitor student progress. Teachers of students with behavioral problems will be better educated to teach, guide, motivate, and encourage. With a 1-to-5 ratio, teachers will be able to assist each learner to attain in a more optimal manner.

Third, textbooks and audio-visual materials will be available in quantity and quality which truly provide for individual differences in the classroom. Materials and methods of instruction will be developed and designed for urban students. Field tested products of instruction utilized with appropiate research based methodology assist teachers to increase student achievement in urban schools.

Fourth, architectural designs of school buildings will be in evidence which are functional in the lives of urban students. Facilities will stress concepts such as team teaching in which the best qualified teachers teach students in large group settings. Proficient teachers will assist learners in committee and individual projects. These teachers will stimulate, challenge, and encourage students to attain optimally. When planning the curriculum cooperatively, the teaching team has opportunities to learn from each other in inservice education.

Architectural designs will also emphasize the concepts of nongradedness whereby flexible grouping is involved to provide for each learner. Nongraded classrooms will advocate utilizing the potentials of each student to an optimal degree.

Facilities in buildings will include functional space for aesthetic education. That which is beautiful, pleasing, and good will be stressed

in objectives, learning activities, and appraisal procedures for all students. Opportunities to survey and experience in depth the aesthetic dimension, as well as all curriculum areas will be the lot of the urban student.

Teachers of aesthetics will have appropiate preservice education in the liberal arts, adequate course work in their major, as well as pre-student and student teaching experiences emphasizing quality and depth.

School buildings built for urban schools will follow a definite philosophy of usefulness and educational excellence for each student.

Fifth, school libraries will house a variety of reference sources. Library books, models, and audio-visual materials in their diverse manifestations will be available to all students. Educational achievement and enrichment will be two concepts emphasized in urban school libraries. Librarians, appropiately trained and educated, will provide optimal assistance to each student to achieve well. Each librarian will be selected based on personality characteristics of being knowledgeable about library resources and possessing traits in desiring to be of service to students and teachers.

Sixth, salaries of urban teachers will be conducive to living a lifestyle of a true professional. Adequate health insurance benefits, salary protection plans, paid leaves of absence, as well as retirement benefits will make for feelings of security among teachers. Principals and supervisors also will receive remuneration conducive to merit providing quality leadership in the instructional arena. Master degree requirements will be a minimal degree requirement for teachers, whereas administrators/supervisors will possess the educational specialist

degree (Ed.S.) in their respective areas of specialty. All school personnel will continue to take increased coursework at leading schools of education on college/university campuses. Other means of quality inservice education will continuously be available to faculty, staff, as well as administrators and supervisors. The best information possible will be available to educators to provide the best curriculum possible to students. Salaries paid will adequately provide for costs of education, as well as inservice expenditures and time.

Seventh, a drug-free school environment will be in evidence. Those exhibiting even initial phases of drug abuse will be identified and treated. Purposeful and meaningful lives in a caring/loving environment minimize the need for drugs and their harmful influence. A curriculum developed for individual students with their unique interests, needs, and goals will be in the offing. Physiological, security, love, and personality needs will be met of all students. Each student needs acceptance to develop feelings of much personal worth.

Eighth, marriage and family life will feel increasing stability. Jobs and positions for earning power will be located in a nearby area for both the husband and wife. Increased job security will be in the offing so that adequate income is available to support a family. Children in a family will experience a good education in the home setting with a variety of quality, stimulating experiences. Seasonal and general unemployment will be a thing of the past. Welfare payments will be greatly minimized due to availability of work at decent salaries and wages. Parents of children will have at least a high school degree or its equivalency. Public libraries containing useful and good recreation-

al materials will be in the offing. A quality lifestyle will be felt and experienced by parents and their offspring in urban areas. Decay of inner cities will be greatly minimized. Federal and state levels of government have realized how vital it is to fund inner cities for safety and urban welfare. Wasteful and extravagant military spending has been greatly minimized making increased funding available to urban areas. With more money available for urban areas, police protection is available to all. Better educated and trained policemen and policewomen work for the good of all. Students in urban schools will feel increasingly safe and secure, resulting in higher academic and vocational achievement in the school setting.

Ninth, after school programs will flourish for students following each day of formal education. These programs will have exemplorary flexible objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures for students. In school as well as in society, learners will experience challenge, interest, and purpose in learning opportunities provided. Instructors will be licensed by the state and screened carefully prior to teaching in the after school programs. Society and education will be more united in their endeavors in teaching students to develop well intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. A philosophy of all being involved in the education process will predominate. Urban schools will be no exception.

Tenth, poverty will be greatly minimized. People in society will have abandoned their ideas on each individual strictly fending for themselves regardless of what happens to others. A loving, caring, and sharing society will prevail. Street people, slum areas, fast food

service wages, and racial discimination will have been greatly minimized. Hopefully, such negative situations will not exist at all. Local, state and national government levels will have put forth maximum united efforts to stamp out these evils. Schools will provide three nourishing meals per day to students. Students and their parents will live in safe, wholesome surroundings conducive to giving the former optimal educational benefits. Society will fail fewer urban students in educational benefits than ever before. People in the societal arena will value the human being more so than wealth, sports and athletic endeavors, actors and actresses, as well as the military-industrial complex. Education for all will be paramount as a societal goal.

Poverty, the greatest evil in society, will increasingly become an item of the past. Poverty for individuals was recognized as the true culprit in the societal arena. With poor quality housing in crime-infested areas, low paying jobs, and a lack of educational benefits, a person faces hopeless situations in life. Marshalling all efforts, business and labor, among others, will realize that schools and continuing education are the best means of building a great nation and developing the individual to achieve more optimally. Urban schools will find that quality objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures for students are being prized highly in the societal arena.

In Closing

Futurism provides opportunities to hope for something better than what exists presently. Increased energy, effort, and finances are needed to move from what exists to what should be in the area of schools and education. The lay public needs to realize that investments in developing each human potential to his/her optimal is an ideal that needs to be realized. Refusing to vote yes consistently to bond issues and levies when money is greatly needed to finance the costs of education represents a rejection of goals truly worthwhile in the societal arena.

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